PLATE 100 From left to right: lasting nippers, a pegging awl, and a peg rasp.

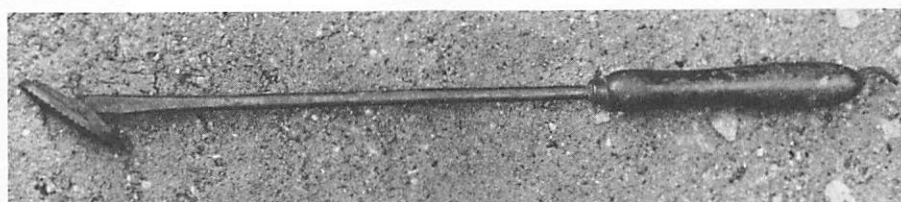



PLATE 101 A peg rasp with a long handle and a head that swivels to fit the inside of a boot. Peg rasps are used to rasp off the points of wooden pegs that come through the insole into the inside of the shoe or boot.

For shoelaces, they'd cut a narrow strip of leather out of the soft part of the hide. It would be a square strip—not round, of course. And then some people used ground-hog hide for laces. They tanned it the same way, and it was supposed to be the toughest and the stoutest of any hide.

In making shoes, Dad used mostly hand tools such as hammers and knives, nippers, pegging awls, etc. Nippers are used to pull the upper of the shoe over the last to shape it before attaching the sole. Pegging awls are used to make the holes to drive the wooden pegs in. The hammers or mallets are used to drive the awls with.

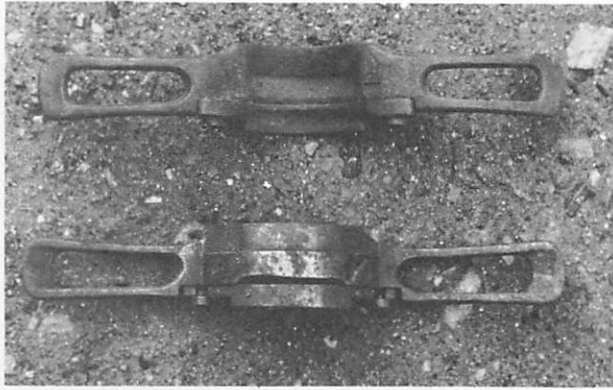



PLATE 102 Heel shaver for shaving off the outside edges of soles and heels, especially on women's shoes, where the heels are higher and more curved.

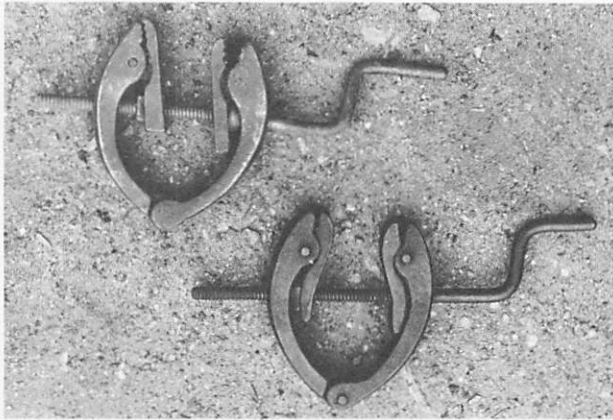



PLATE 103 Shank lasters for drawing the uppers over the last and getting out all the wrinkles in the leather.

PLATE 104 Saddle hammers for tacking wooden pegs into leather, especially on saddles where the long heads of the hammers help the shoemaker get into difficult, hard-to-reach places.

PLATE 105 A round knife for cutting leather. The tool, used mostly in harness work, is pushed through the leather.

PLATE 106 A gauge knife for cutting leather into strips of a certain width. The blade is set to the desired width using the metal rule, and then the leather is pulled through between the blade and the handle.

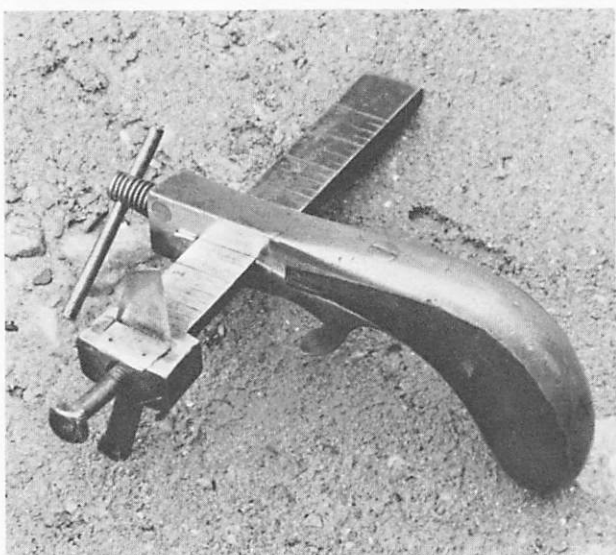



PLATE 107 The gauge knife in action.

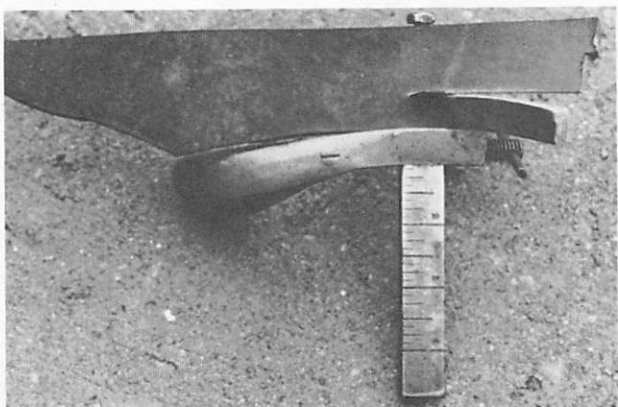
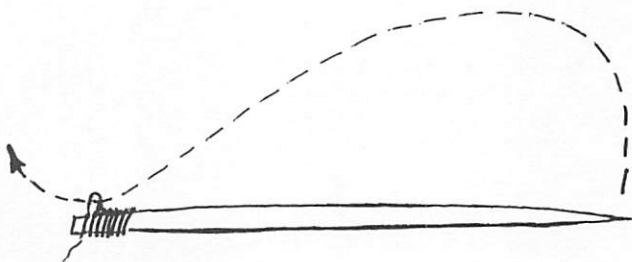



PLATE 108 A rounding tool. Square strips of leather are pulled through one of the holes, thus rounding them off to the desired diameter.

PLATE 109 The bristle is twirled between two fingers to wrap its end tightly with thread. Then the bristle is twirled backward a half turn to open a loop of thread at the end. The point of the bristle is fed through this loop to make a knot, and then the thread is waxed over to hold it tightly in place.

It's all hand work. There weren't any mechanized tools at all at that time. You did the sewing by hand with two needles that were steel needles or bristles. Bristles out of a hog's back. Wax that on the end and it will follow the hole you made with the awl—even if it was a curved hole. That was the object in using a bristle. It was flexible and would follow that curved hole. I hunted for some here yesterday. I've got a pack somewhere that I've had for years, but I never did find them. I wouldn't know of anybody anymore now that'd know how to put a wax thread on a bristle and make it stay so they could sew with it.

Now many people had their own lasts—that's the wooden form in the shape of a foot that the shoe is shaped around. They'd find a shoe that fit them and they'd tear that shoe apart when it was worn out and make a wooden last to fit that foot. Then they'd save that and bring their lasts when they brought their hide in to have it tanned to have their shoes made.

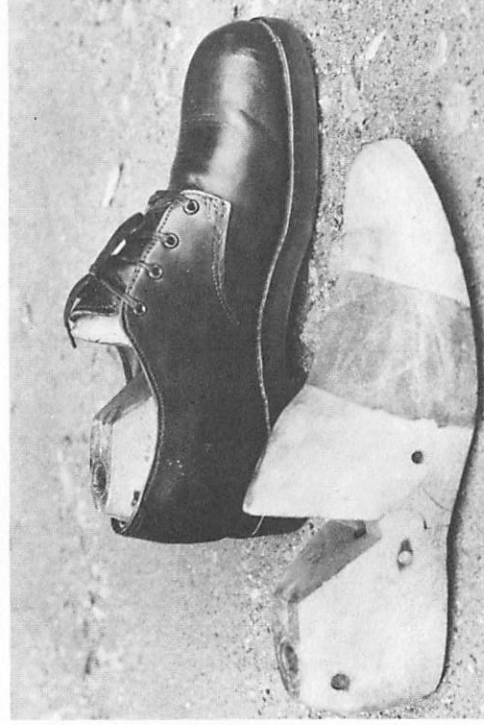



PLATE 110 The wooden lasts Ernest uses to make shoes for himself. Metal lasts are used only for repair work—not for making shoes.

PLATE 111 To remove the last from the shoe after the shoe is made, a metal rod is inserted into the hole, and, with a sharp pull, the two halves of the hinged last snap together, allowing the last to be slipped out heel first.

PLATE 112 A paper pattern Ernest cut out to show us the shape of the vamp . . .

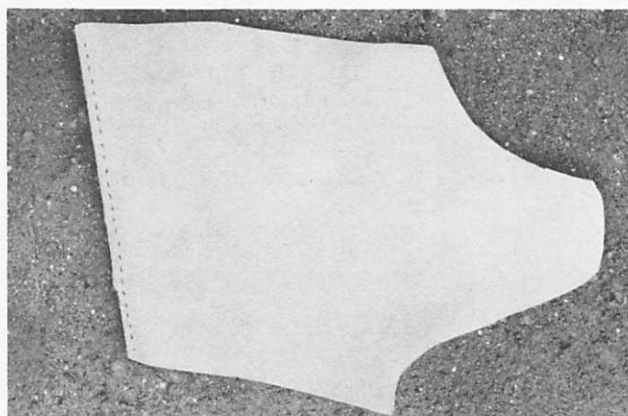



PLATE 113 . . . the quarter . . .

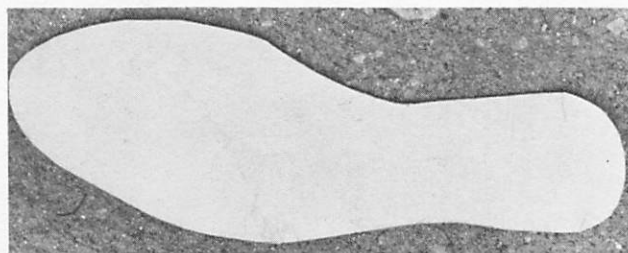



PLATE 114 . . . and the insole.

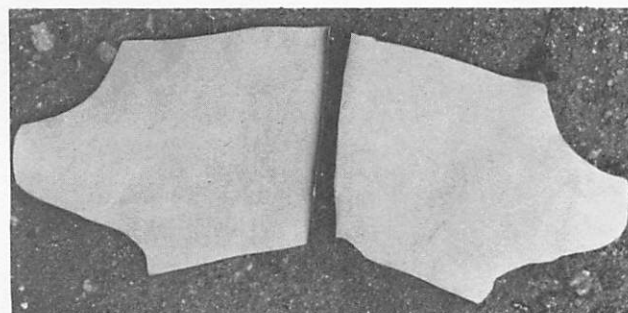



PLATE 115 First the two quarters are sewed together at the back. The two narrow flaps up the back stay to the outside of the shoe and are covered later by another strip of leather.

If they didn't have lasts, the shoemaker would measure their feet and try to find a pattern that fit. They'd use the lasts they had. My father had patterns. Back when he made shoes he had to have patterns for different sizes and so on. I can remember patterns hanging in the shop against the wall for different size shoes, different styles, whatever he had orders for. And I remember when he had tables full of lasts—I guess all you could haul in a pickup truck—all different sizes. But there weren't many styles. Mostly they were all just plain lace-up shoes. A lot of women's shoes had buttons on them. And then there were rough, heavy work shoes called brogans. In the morning sometimes it would be so cold you couldn't put them on stiff. On those, the leather for the uppers would be turned inside out with the flesh side or the fuzzy side to the outside, and the smooth side next to the foot. They'd turn water better if the leather was turned inside out. I don't know why, but it would turn water better. And it makes the shoes smoother inside, too, to turn the outside in.

A shoe usually had four main pieces of leather not counting the sole, the insole, or the heel. That's the vamp (or the toe and tongue part), the two quarters, and the leather cap that covered the toe. For the vamp, he'd select the best part of the leather. That's where almost all of the wear comes because that's where the shoe bends and wrinkles. An inferior piece of leather would give way.

Here's how you put a shoe together: You stitch the vamp and the quarters together first. Then the quarters are sewed together in the back of the shoe with the edges out (or the flaps out), and then a small strip would be added up the back of the shoe to cover that seam where the two pieces are joined.

Then the insole is cut out to fit the last. Actually, you can cut the insole out first, fit it to the last, then sew the two quarters together with your flax thread and then add the vamp. If you use a cap on the toe it goes across next. Then you start shaping the upper over the last. Wet it and stretch it to conform to the shape of the last and the size of the shoe you want. When you get that stretched and shaped over the last, you should have about a half-inch to three-quarters-inch lap on the underside of the last to attach the sole through. On the bottom of the last, the insole piece comes first and is tacked down in place with a couple of tacks (one in the toe and one in the heel). Then the upper is lapped around, and as it is stretched into place, it is tacked down through the insole into the last. The sole goes onto the top of that; and if you want a heel, you add that onto the top of the sole.

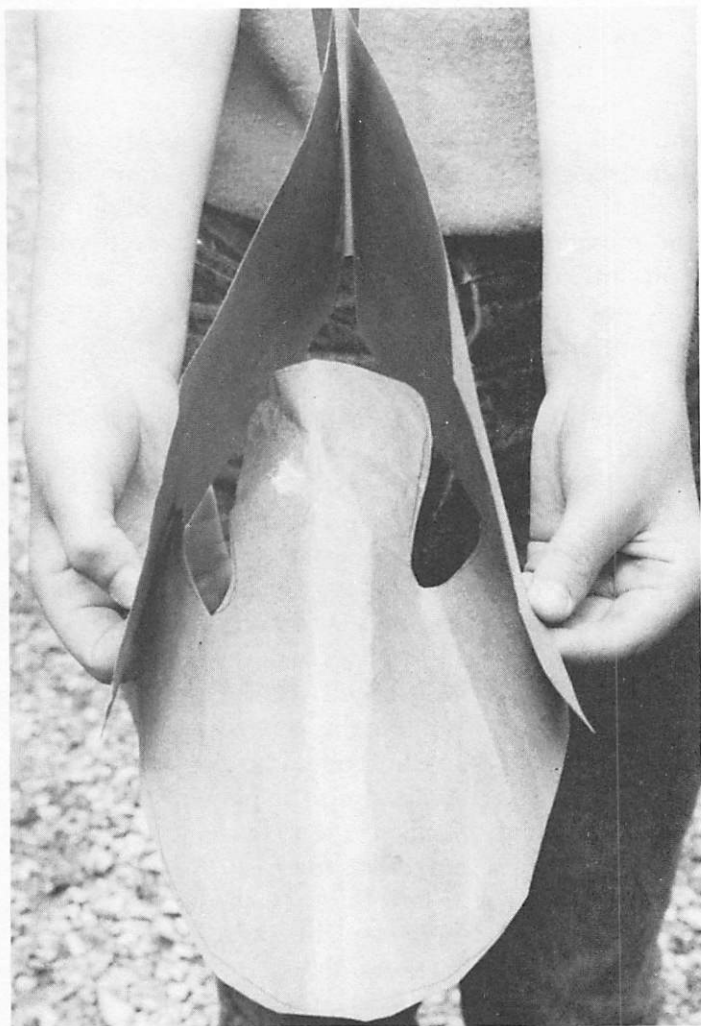



PLATE 116 Next the vamp is added.

PLATE 117

PLATE 118 With the insole already tacked in place on the last, the upper is pulled down over the insole with the lasting nippers and pegged. The hammer built into the nippers is used to drive the pegs.

PLATE 119 Another type of last (the top section is pulled out of the finished shoe freeing the bottom section). Ernest used two pieces of scrap leather to show us how the lap of the upper is pegged through the insole into the last.

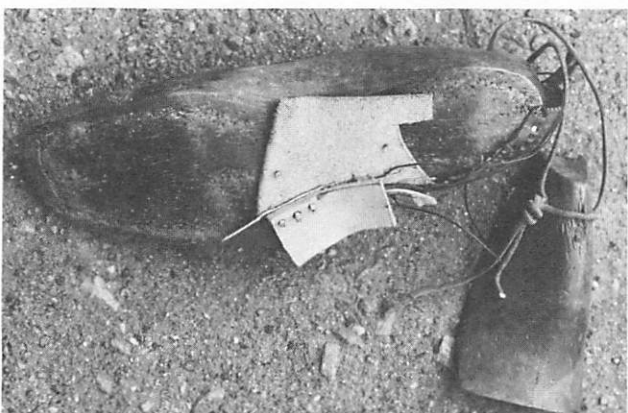
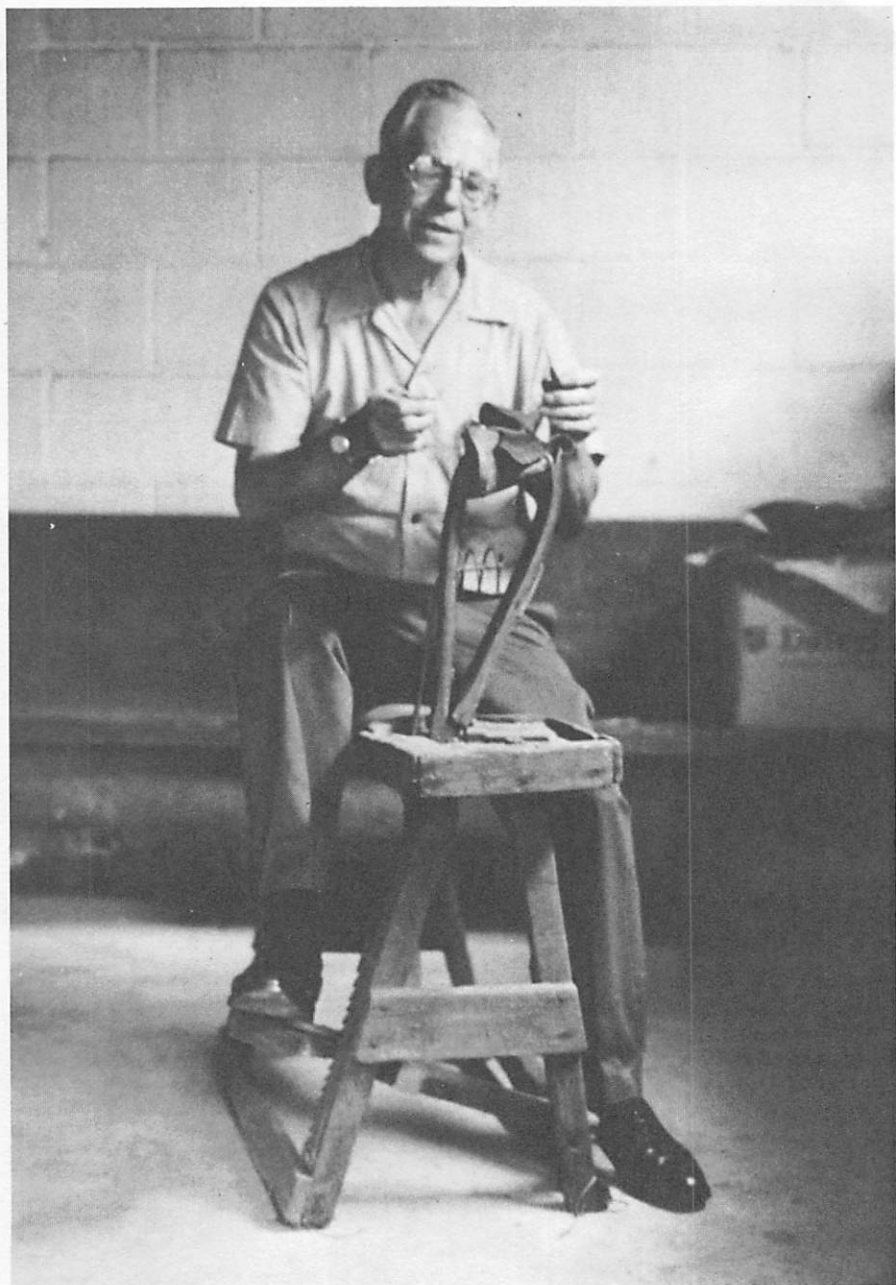



PLATE 120 A stitching horse was usually used to free both hands for stitching and pegging.

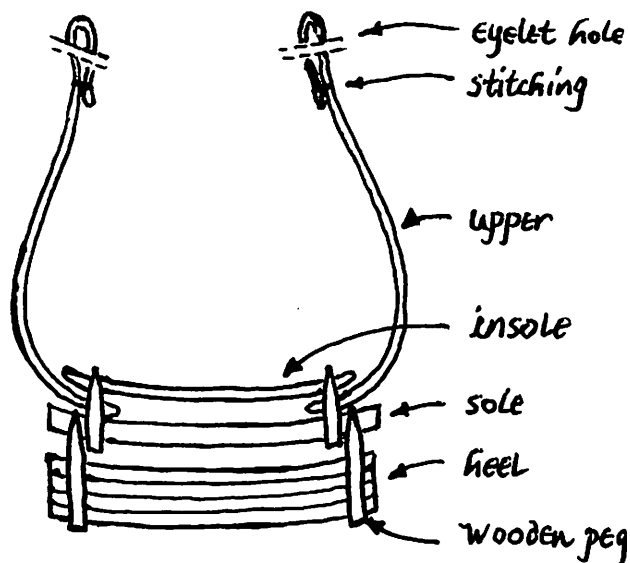



PLATE 121 A cross section of a shoe from the back showing how the top of the shoe is looped and sewed for the eyelet holes.

Before the sole is put on, you remove the tacks that are in the insole, as you wouldn't be able to get at them to take them out after the sole is in place. As you draw the upper over the last, you can begin putting on the sole, pegging it down right through the lap of the upper and the insole as you go through holes punched with the pegging awl. Or you can fasten the upper's lap with wooden pegs as you shape it, and then as you add the sole, remove the wooden pegs and replace them with new ones that go through the sole and the upper. That way you only have one row of wooden pegs all the way around the shoe, and not double and triple rows. As tacks are removed and replaced with pegs, the tacks are kept for the next job. The heel is made of layers of leather pegged to the sole with longer pegs.

For stitching the uppers, holes for the thread are punched through the leather with the sewing awl. They didn't do any more of that than they had to. When you're doing it by hand, you don't want an excessive amount of stitching—decorative stitching would be left off completely. Nor would there be any stitching around the top of the uppers—that would be left plain.

Where the eyelets went, they'd double the leather over and stitch the back part inside the shoe. Holes would be punched through for the laces. If the leather was real heavy, that section wouldn't

have to be doubled at all. To soften the leather on the shoes, Neat's-foot oil was often used, or fish oil or mutton tallow.

How long the shoes lasted depended on how much you wore them, but most people figured on getting a year out of a pair of shoes. If you wore them out before the year was out, you went barefooted until you got another pair.

WILLIE UNDERWOOD

My grandparents, Willie and Bessie Underwood—"Papa Willie" and "Mama Bessie" to all us grandchildren—live just a half mile off a well-traveled highway. It seems much longer, though, because their graveled driveway twists and turns and takes you up and down bumpy little hills till you reach their house sitting alone in a cleared area on a mountainside. They live in a house built of hard oak boards. It was originally an "L"-shaped house, to which Papa Willie has added two more rooms. At least six generations of Mama Bessie's family have lived in this house.

It is a warm, comfortable, homey place. Walking in the front door, the first thing you see are deer horns on the opposite wall. Behind the door is a gun cabinet with three or four guns standing up inside. There are also turkey claws and a turkey's beard in there. Fishing poles stand in the corner between the wall and the gun cabinet. In the big old kitchen, there are old-timey dish cabinets, an antique pie safe, an old treadle sewing machine, and lots of other interesting utensils and furniture.

Before getting to the house, there is a rock storage cellar on the right and dog houses along both sides of the driveway with a coon or deer dog chained to each one—seven in all. Papa Willie's favorites are Queenie, a coon dog, and Beagle, a deer dog. He's had both of them for as long as I can remember. His hobbies are fishing, hunting, and gardening. He hunts mostly in Rabun County. My brother, Bobby, and I often go fishing with him down on Tugalo Lake, camping out overnight. We usually catch catfish, and sometimes a bream or two.

When Papa Willie was a boy, he usually worked in the garden. He has told me that when he was very small, his mother made him a little hoe using a cornstalk as a hoe handle. For as long as I can remember, he has always had a garden with plenty of corn and tomatoes.

As an adult he has worked in many places doing a variety of jobs. While he served in the Army in World War II, he made special

PLATE 122 Willie Underwood with Queenie.

shoes for crippled soldiers. After getting out of service, he worked for Bob Vickers and Bud Scroggs in Clayton, Georgia, repairing shoes. He took agricultural training under the G. I. Bill. Besides farming, he has worked as an auto mechanic in Clayton and Toccoa, Georgia. Although officially "retired" now, he is back working as a mechanic for Rabun County. He's seventy years old but still looks and acts a lot younger than that to me.

The idea for this piece started when I got to asking some questions about the origins of my baby chair. From there we talked about the clocks, other chairs, and some antique tools of Papa Willie's. For me, it was really unusual to see how people used to make shoes.

KIM HAMILTON

Article and photographs by Craig Carlton, Nina Folsom, Kim Hamilton, Dana Holcombe, and Jeff Giles

PAPA WILLIE: "The first shoes I remember around here were rough. I've seen them where what stitching there was was done with whang leather, which is squirrel skin. They'd take the hair off with ashes and water, and then wash it and work it and cut it into strips. Same thing for the laces—ground-hog hide, squirrel skin, cat hide, anything almost. It was rough. Those people were up in the *woods.*

"And at the time I'm talking about, there wasn't much right and left to a shoe. The lasts were straight and you could wear your shoe one day on one foot and one day on the other. I mean it was *that* straight, now. That's true. Now that is true.

"I was ten years old and you could still buy straight last shoes. 'Course now they cut your feet up. You couldn't hardly tell one foot from the other until you finally broke them. You'd have to get them wet before they'd shape to your feet where you could wear 'em.

"There were four or five people around that made shoes. Usually they swapped them for work. Money didn't amount to too much then."

The early shoes were made using almost no tools. A pocket knife, a punching tool of some sort, and a last are about all that were required.

Leather for the shoes was tanned by soaking the cow hides for months in an ooze made from chestnut oak bark and water. This was usually done in a tanning trough made by hollowing out a log in much the same way a dugout canoe might be made.

PLATE 123 The tools Willie used to make a shoe for us. The last has a removable midsection so that it can be slipped out of the finished shoe. The strips of leather tacked to its front outer edge were probably added by the owner to increase the size of the last so that the next shoes made on it would better fit his foot.

The other tools, clockwise, are a shoe hammer, pegging awl (made out of a nail set in a block of wood), a punch (which Willie made out of an old Army knife), a package of sewing needles, a forming tool (similar to a rasp), needle-nosed pliers for pulling needles through the leather, wooden pegs, and leather snips.

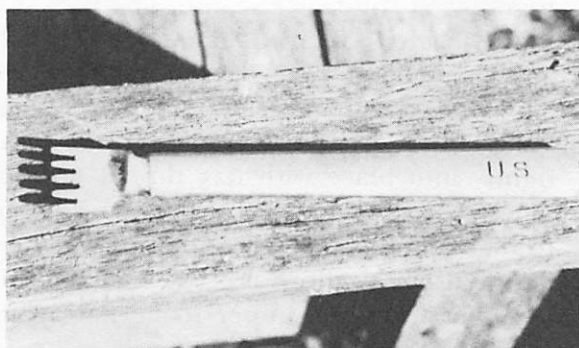



PLATE 124 A lacing tool Willie made from a dinner knife. The tool punches holes in the leather for stitching.

According to Willie, the best leather for shoes comes from a section about sixteen inches wide by twenty-four inches long on either side of the backbone right over the kidneys. The leather that comes from the neck is thick and can be used for heels, but it is fibrous and not of the prime quality that was preferred. The thinner sections, called flanky leather, could be used if the other was not available.

Early shoes made in this area were extremely simple. Rather than having two quarters, which would have to be sewn together up the back, the quarters were cut out of one piece of leather. The vamp and tongue were also one piece of leather. This meant that the only stitching that had to be done was along the two short "I seams," where the vamp and the quarter were joined. This stitching was usually done with whang leather. The shoes were not reinforced at the eyelets, nor did they have caps. Leather caps were added across the toes when the toes wore through. The toe would be taken loose from the sole, the cap set in and pegged to the sole and toe, and then it was "whanged" (sewed with whang leather) across the top.

A heel spur, or counter, was sometimes used, as this was another area of the shoe that wore quickly, but it was not found on all the shoes.

Leather for the shoes was cut out according to a pattern made to fit the person's foot. Then the pieces were soaked, usually for twenty-four hours, to make them pliable and easy to work. This process was called "casing." Other advantages of working the leather damp were that it was easier to punch the holes; the flax thread (if it was available) or whang leather being used for stitching would pull into the damp leather, making a smoother job; and the leather, as it dried, would dry around the wooden pegs and bind them tightly into place. The pegs would wear down at the same rate as the leather.

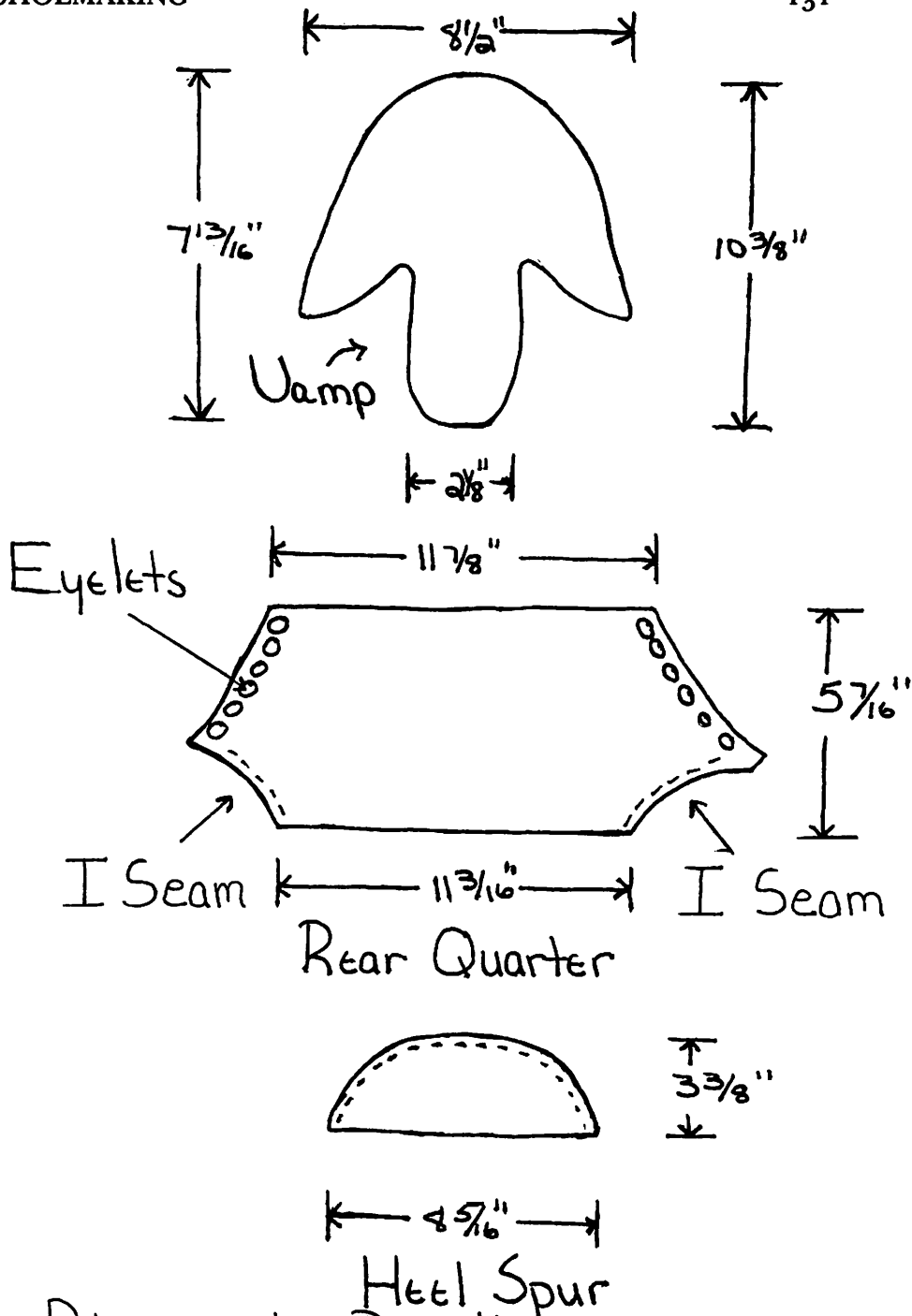
The first step was generally to sew the vamp and the quarter together at the two I seams. The hair side of the leather was kept to the inside. Willie explained that this helped the shoes last longer, and also helped them seal up better so they wouldn't leak as badly. Then the insole was tacked to the last in two places (at the heel and toe), and the upper drawn down over the insole and pulled tightly into place with flax thread or whang leather. Sometimes a piece of carved hickory wood was slipped into place at this point to make a crude arch. At the points where the uppers wrinkled or doubled up, swallowforks, or V-shaped notches, were cut to allow the overlap of the upper to lie flat against the insole all the way around.

8½"
7 13/16"
10 3/8"
Vamp
2⅛"
Eyelets
11⅞"
5 7/16"
I Seam
11 3/16"
I Seam
Rear Quarter
3 3/8"
4 5/16"
Heel Spur
Diagram by: Dana Holcomb and Kim Hamilton

PLATE 125

PLATE 126 On some old shoes, stitching was done with homegrown flax and hog-bristle needles. Here, with cotton, Willie shows us how to join homemade, hand-twisted thread to the needle in a process called "making a wax end."

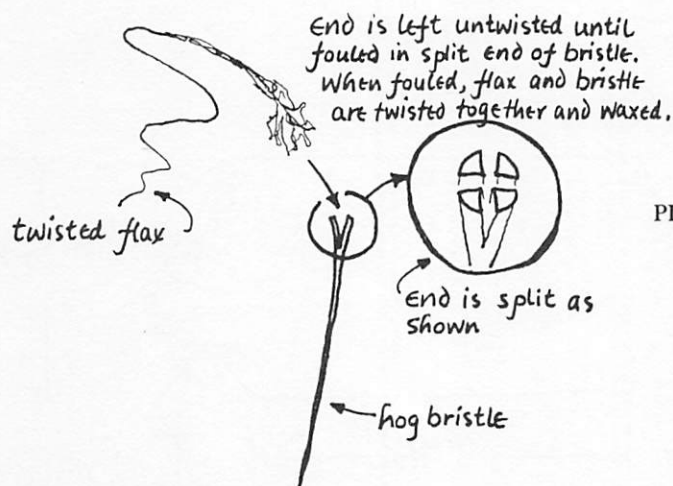



PLATE 127

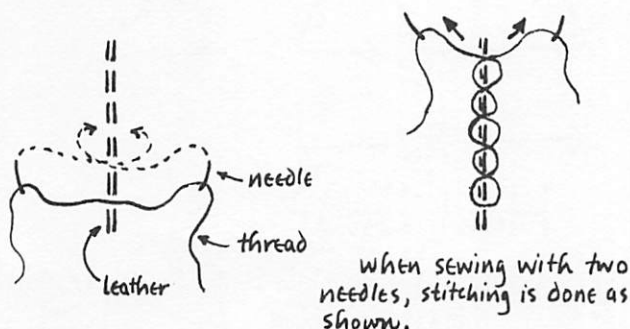



PLATE 128 Actual stitching with thread was done using two needles or bristles. No knots are tied in the thread, which is crisscrossed through the holes and pulled tight.

PLATE 129 Punching holes with the lacing tool for the stitching.

PLATE 130 The upper portion of the shoe Willie made for us, as it looked sewn together. This shoe, unlike many older ones, has a heel spur.

PLATE 131 Underneath, thread has been used to hold the leather around the last and over the insole prior to pegging on the sole. A piece of carved hickory is in place to make an arch.

PLATE 132 Now Willie sets the leather for the sole on the shoe and . . .

PLATE 133 . . . pegs it temporarily with one peg at the toe and two in the middle of the sole.

PLATE 134 To make the maple pegs he will need, Willie cuts off small slabs with the grain . . .

PLATE 135 . . . shaves off the edges on one end of each slab so the pegs will have points . . .

PLATE 136 . . . and splits off the pegs about the width of matchsticks and ½" long for the sole and ¾" for the heel.

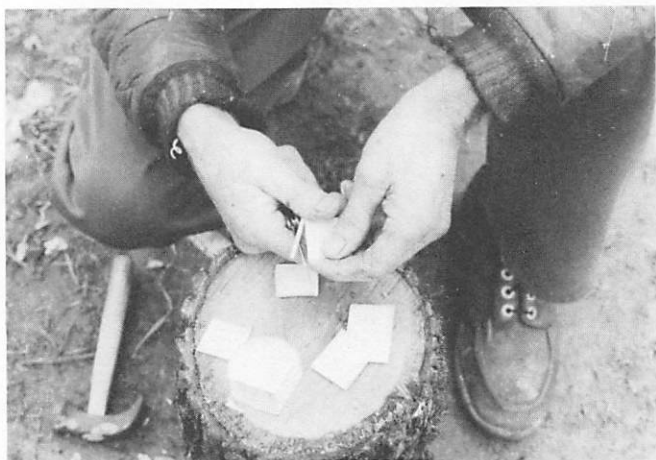



PLATE 137 Willie makes a mark in the damp sole leather with his fingernail as a guide for pegging. A round block of wood with a nail in the end makes the holes for the pegs

PLATE 138 The pegs are driven in far enough away from the sole's edge that they will go through both the outer sole, the edges of the uppers, and the insole.

PLATE 139 Excess sole is now trimmed off with a pocket knife. Some shoemakers used a lip knife, which had a guard at the tip so the upper would not be cut accidentally.

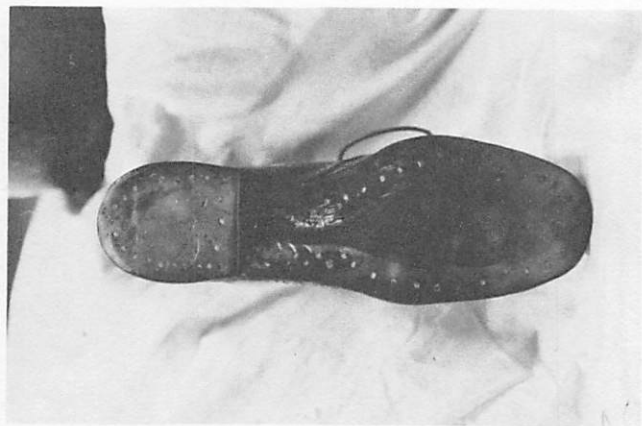



PLATE 140 Then the sole is attached with fifteen to twenty-five long pegs . . .

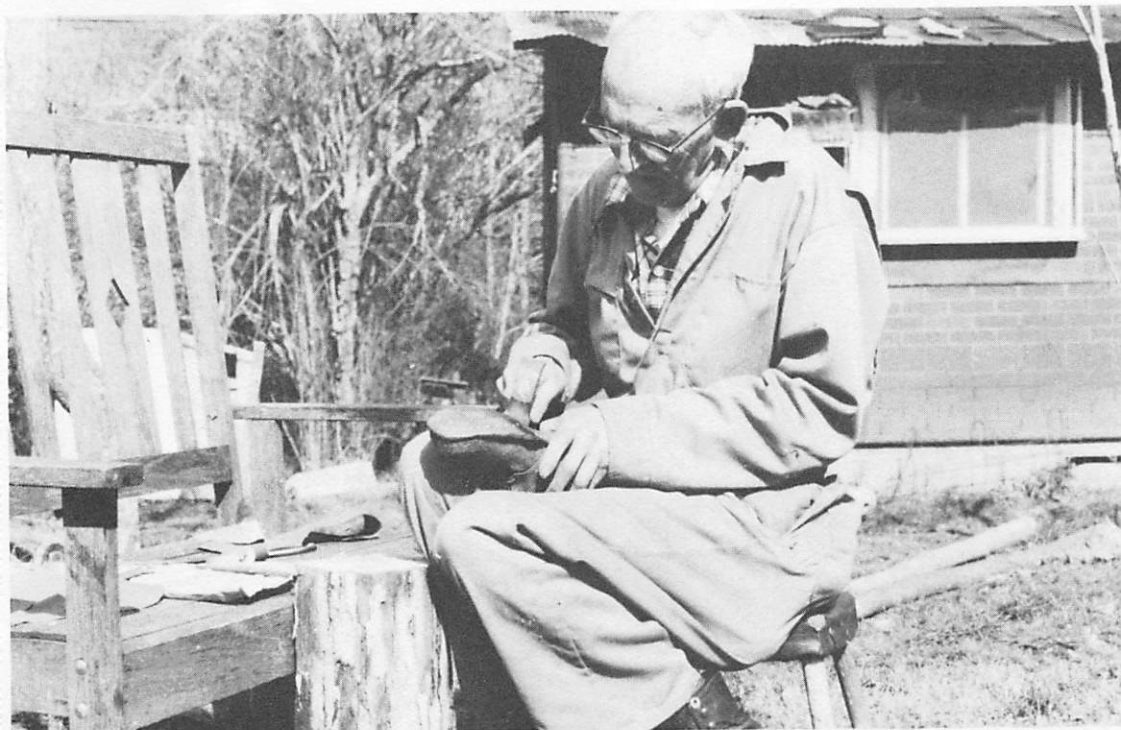



PLATE 141 . . . and a second row of pegs is driven in at the shank.

PLATE 142 The finished shoe.

PLATE 143 An old pair of shoes made by Garnett Lovell's father for his granddaughter. (Garnett was featured in *Foxfire 4*, pp. 341–46.)

The sole was put into place and pegged with maple pegs, a double row being added at the shank, the narrow portion of the sole and the area of greatest strain when the shoe is being worn. The heel, made of layers of leather and built up to the desired height, was pegged into place with longer pegs.

A tool called a "float" was used to trim off the points of the pegs on the inside of the shoe (or "float the ends of your pegs off"), and a thin leather pad was sometimes added to the inside to make the shoes more comfortable.

To finish the shoes, beeswax and beef tallow or coon oil would be melted together and smeared all over them while still warm. This would help seal them and make them more waterproof, and would help preserve the leather. The older shoes leaked a good bit anyway, but this process helped.

The laces were then cut out. Some people used a gauge knife like the type demonstrated by Ernest Riddle in the previous section, but shoemakers like Willie would just gauge the width with their fingers and cut the laces with a pocket knife. As he said, "I nerve-cut most of mine."

TOYS AND GAMES

Play is in the nature of all children. In some cases, they play with toys and games manufactured and marketed nationally. In some cases they play with toys and games made for them by parents out of love, or lack of money, or both. In the vacuum created by the absence of entertainment provided by others, children create their own.

We began researching the following two chapters years ago with the notion that in our mountains, long before there were stores, the earliest settlers must have developed games and toys for their children that were "typically Appalachian." We soon found, however, that the origins of those we found were hopelessly scrambled. Immigrants had come into the area bringing with them memories of games and toys from numerous other countries and traditions and cultures, had made copies for their children, and had sometimes altered them to fit a new environment and sometimes not. And those children, in turn, had made copies for their children, and had sometimes altered them yet again and sometimes not. People from different backgrounds bumped up against each other in these mountains and traded and combined ideas and produced new offshoots, the origins of which simply disappeared into the mist. Stanley Hicks, a favorite contact interviewed first for *Foxfire 3* (pp. 139–57), was able to tell us, "Dad would make us little old toy horses, toy steers, toy wagons, wheelbarrows, dancers—all made out of wood. I mean it was all made by hand." But he couldn't tell us where the idea for a toy like a dancer (or top) had come from within his own family. Certainly it would not be considered traditionally Appalachian, since tops have been around nearly forever, but was the specific pattern Stanley's father used handed down within the family or conceived on the spot out of necessity? You see part of the problem we faced.

Also blurring the origins was the crafts revival that hit the mountains before the turn of the century, partly as a means of preserving some of the handicrafts in the face of increasing mechanization,